



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

ICE DEPORTS ALGERIAN WHO ASSOCIATED WITH 9/11 HIJACKERS

SAN DIEGO – U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has deported an Algerian man who used a false passport to enter the United States and later met with two of the 9/11 hijackers in San Diego prior to their attacks on the Pentagon.

Samir Abdoun, 38, was escorted from the United States to Algeria by ICE officers today.

Following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, ICE special agents learned that Abdoun had previously met with hijackers Nawaf al Hazmi and Khalid al Mihdhar, two of the four "muscle" terrorists aboard American Airlines Flight 77 when it was flown into the Pentagon. ICE agents arrested Abdoun on Sept. 22, 2001, after agents identified him as a fugitive in hiding who had been ordered deported by a federal immigration judge in 1999.



Abdoun told agents he had lived for a time with four San Diego men, all of whom were housemates of Hazmi and Mihdhar. One of the roommates, Mohdar Abdullah, even introduced Abdoun to Hazmi and Mihdhar. These four individuals were arrested shortly after the 9/11 attacks as material witnesses in the Pentagon investigation.

“The Department of Homeland Security and ICE were created because individuals like Abdoun were able to exploit gaps in the nation's immigration system,” said Ron Smith, field office director for ICE Detention and Removal Operations in San Diego. “He moved in the same circles as the 9/11 hijackers. He is a textbook example of why ICE will continue to pursue and deport absconders, criminal aliens, and immigration law violators. Every gap must be closed.”

Border Patrol agents with U.S. Customs and Border Protection at the San Clemente checkpoint had initially arrested Abdoun in November 1998. The ensuing investigation revealed that Abdoun had entered the country illegally by claiming to be a French citizen and presenting a false passport when he first arrived in Los Angeles. Abdoun was placed in removal proceedings. However, he failed to appear in court and was placed on a list of immigration fugitives sought by federal authorities. A judge subsequently ordered Abdoun removed from the country.

After he was located in September 2001, Abdoun was convicted in federal court on criminal charges related to immigration, passport, and Social Security fraud. Abdoun was sentenced July 23, 2002 to time served and three years supervised release, then transferred to ICE custody to be deported.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security.